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Tiffany - The Way to His Pocket.

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THE WAY TO HIS POCKET

A Comedy in One Act

BY

ESTHER B. TIFFANY

AUTHOR OF "A RICE PUDDING," "ANITA'S TRIAL," "YOUNG MR. PRITCHARD," "THAT PATRICK," ETC.

BOSTON

Walter H. Baker & Co.

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CHARACTERS.

REUBEN BURTON	*Philanthropist, floriculturist*
ROBERT GREY	*Artist*
PRUDENCE BURTON, PATIENCE BURTON	*Reuben's daughters*
ADDIE	*Maid servant*

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THE WAY TO HIS POCKET.

SCENE. — BURTON'S *parlor.* PATIENCE *watering plants on the window sill.* PRUDENCE *knitting on purse.*

PRU. Ugh! How cold this room is! Just hand me that afghan, Patience.

PA. Don't you think we might open the register a trifle?

PRU. Papa would never get over it if we did.

PA. I declare, I believe papa loves his plants more than his daughters. No matter how cold we are, the thermometer must stay just so, because the dry furnace heat is so bad for the cypripedium, or the schizanthus primatus or the —

PRU. (*holding up purse*). There, finished! Isn't it a pretty purse?

PA. Is it for Mr. Grey?

PRU. For Mr. Grey! Patience! No, for papa.

PA. (*looking out of the window*). If there isn't Mr. Grey this minute.

PRU. (*running to window*). No, not really?

PA. He's coming in. He sees us; he's bowing. There, I hear the bell.

PRU. How's my hair?

PA. All rumpled — just as he likes it.

PRU. I hear Addie bringing him in.

(*Enter* ADDIE *and* GREY.)

ADDIE. This way, sir. (*Exit* ADDIE.)

PA. } Oh, Mr. Grey!
PRU. }

GREY. So delighted to see you again.

PRU. Sit down.

GREY. But are you ill? You are all wrapped up. Let me shut the door. You look half frozen.

PA. Oh, no; don't shut the door.

GREY. Why, you are actually shivering. Aha, I see that the register is closed.

PRU. Oh, yes ; but antirrhinum, you know —

PA. Papa's darling maurandia —

PRU. Can't endure the dry furnace air.

GREY. Oh, can't they. (*Aside.*) Aunt what-you-callum and papa's darling Miranda? Who in thunder are they? Cranky, elderly relatives probably. (*He opens the register with his foot.*)

PRU. They are quite the idols of papa's heart.

PA. He really devotes much more time and attention to them than to us.

PRU. The whole house is run to suit them.

PA. And Prue has such a cold!

PRU. (*goes on tending the plants*). And we mayn't have gas at night, either, you know, because gas is so injurious to them.

GREY. Why, they are perfect sensitive plants, ain't they? (*Aside.*) Cranky old creatures!

PRU. Well, papa's a dear, anyway, and I've made him the sweetest purse. Just look.

GREY (*examining purse*). Did you really spin this dainty little web?

PRU. (*courtesying*). Oh, thank you, Mr. Grey, I'm not a spider.

GREY. If you were, I should want to be a fly at once. But how do you open the thing?

PRU. Oh, that's just the charm of it.

GREY. Your father will be cleverer than I if he finds his way into it.

PRU. I've not the least objection to his finding his way into it, but I do object to his finding his way out.

GREY. Aren't purses generally made for use?

PRU. Yes; but not for abuse. Papa is the most incorrigible giver — to everybody but to us — you ever saw. He never can say no to a beggar.

GREY. I'm delighted to hear you say that.

PRU. Why, you don't come under that head, do you?

GREY. I may, who knows?

PRU. He fairly supports half the hand organs, and all the German bands in the city.

GREY. Well, now, I always wondered who did support those German bands.

PRU. And so I thought if I gave him a purse that he couldn't open very easily —

GREY. Ah — I begin to see.

(*Enter* BURTON.)

BURT. What, what! Why, my dear girls, the air here is dry enough to turn one into a mummy. I am sure the reg —

PRU. Papa, Mr. Grey.

PA. Mr. Grey, papa, whom we met at grandmamma's.

BURT. Oh — eh? Mr. Grey? Happy to meet you. Very happy. But Prudence, my dear, the temperature. I am convinced that the register must be opened. Yes, it is, actually opened.

PRU. Oh, no, papa.

PA. Indeed, we didn't open it.

GREY. Oh, the register? I shall have to plead guilty. You see, sir, your daughter was positively blue with the cold.

BURT. But my precious little maurandia! You have no idea — no idea of the extreme sensitiveness to dry air of — (*Goes to window and examines plants.*)

GREY (*aside*). Confound Miranda!

PRU. See, papa; I've made you this lovely purse. Give me your old one, and I'll put the change in here. So!

BURT. Oh, thank you, my dear, thank you! But how does it open?

PRU. Oh, never mind now.

BURT. Well, I'm rather in a hurry now. I want to see about the potting of my begonias. I will see you later, Mr. Grey — important business. (*Exit* BURTON.)

PRU. Didn't I tell you he was a dear?

GREY. He came by it naturally — I mean — that is — By the way, I took the liberty of bringing you —

PRU. } Oh, what?
PA. }

GREY. Two tickets for the Artists' Ball.

PRU. } Oh, how lovely.
PA. }

GREY. It was rather hard to obtain them, but —

PRU. I never went to a ball in my life.

GREY. And I furthermore took the liberty of designing two costumes for you —

PRU. } Costumes for us!
PA. }

GREY. When I came to set about it, there were some roses on my table, and before I knew it — I'd meant to get up something more original — I had sketched in two little things which I called the red and the white roses of Lancaster and York.

PRU. (*taking one sketch*). The red rose for me.

PA. (*taking other sketch*). And the white one mine.

GREY (*to* PRU.). Yours, you see, is to be all delicate rose-colored drapery — diaphanous stuff. A girdle of twisted stems with the thorns on them —

PRU. But won't my partners get pricked?

GREY. I devoutly hope they may.

PRU. But you? — that is, if you condescend to dance with me —

GREY. Oh, I'm past minding a prick or two.

PA. Tell me about my dress.

GREY (*to* PA.). Oh, you are to be in white, you know — (*To* PRU., *eagerly.*) There's just the stuff for your dress at Lordly's. There are only a few yards left, and if you don't secure it at once, it will be gone. It's only a dollar and a half a yard — and in your hair — (*They talk apart.*)

PA. (*aside*). "Ah, that way blows the wind!" At grandma's, I was not certain. Well, take him, dear little red rose of Lancaster. I wonder what he is whispering to her. But, oh dear! what have we been dreaming about? How can we ever get our dresses? Papa will never consent to our going to a ball. He always wants us to dress so soberly. Oh, Prue, dear —

PRU. Yes, Patience.

GREY. Just let me put a touch here. (*Sits down with pencil.*)

PA. (*aside to* PRU.). However can we get our dresses? Papa will never consent.

PRU. Oh, Patience!

PA. We'll just have to refuse at once.

PRU. And my dress was to be so lovely!

PA. And the worst of it is we can't tell Mr. Grey the real reason — he'll think it so stingy of papa.

PRU. Papa is so generous — to everybody but to us.

PA. There's the money that grandma sent us Christmas. Papa just keeps it under lock and key, and won't let us touch a penny. But it's really our very own.

PRU. It would buy two lovely dresses.

PA. I could get on with my old white muslin; but I must have new slippers, and a wrap of some kind.

PRU. And I must have a whole new dress! No, there's no hope.

GREY (*coming forward with sketch*). There; that's better, perhaps.

PRU. Yes, it's very pretty — but — on the whole — on second thoughts — we — Patience and I — think, perhaps, we shall not go, after all.

GREY. Not go!

PA. You see we've never been to a ball.

GREY. All the better.

PRU. And the late hours — the heat —

PA. And Prue has such a cold —

GREY. Why, a minute ago you were all eagerness — don't the designs suit you?

PRU. They are exquisite.

GREY. Then —

PRU. Please do not press the point, Mr. Grey.

GREY (*stiffly*). Oh, very well.

(*Enter* BURTON *with trowel.*)

BURT. My dear, can you tell me who knocked over my precious, priceless — Oh, Mr. Grey —

PRU. I think it was that old blind beggar, papa, that's always haunting the premises.

BURT. The blind beggar? Oh, no, no — he's very harmless — very inoffensive. (*Going to window.*) Why, there he is this minute. (*Calling out of window.*) Yes, my good man, certainly. (*Takes out purse.*) A few nickels — a most worthy object — but how the dickens? (*Fumbles with purse.*) How do you open this, my dear?

PRU. Oh, it's very simple. Never mind the beggar now, papa.

BURT. Simple. (*Fumbles.*) Here, then There you are. (*Throws purse out of window.*)

PRU. Papa!

PA. Your new pretty purse! And it was full.

BURT. But, my dear, I could not find my way into it, and you wouldn't keep the old fellow waiting forever, would you? Ugh, those rascally street boys! (*Gesticulating wildly at window.*) Batting their balls against my conservatory windows. Stop that — stop, stop, I say. (*Exit hastily.*)

PRU. Sometimes I wish we were blind beggars!

PA. Or organ grinders.

PRU. Or brass bands!

PA. Or women with missions.

PRU. Impossible to persuade Mr. Grey, after this, that papa would not give us money for our dresses.

PA. See; he's gathering up his sketches.

PRU. Oh, dear!

GREY (*coldly*). So your decision about the ball is final?

PRU. Oh, yes — final.

GREY. I am sorry to have taken up your time with so paltry an affair. Good-morning.

PRU. Good-morning, Mr. Grey. Oh, dear, he's angry —

GREY. Good-morning. (*Exit.*)

PRU. (*throwing herself on* PATIENCE'S *neck*). He's angry — he's gone — he'll never come back again. And he took so much trouble with the sketches. Oh, dear — oh, dear —

PA. He's not gone very far yet. He has followed papa into the conservatory.

PRU. Hasn't he a divine nose?

PA. (*musing*). It might do as a makeshift.

PRU. Patty! To call Mr. Grey's nose a makeshift.

PA. Mr. Grey's nose! Who's talking about noses? Look here, Prue — do you want very much to go to the ball?

PRU. Do I!

PA. Then you shall. It's naughty — oh, so naughty! — but nevertheless, Prue. Didn't Mr. Grey say there was only a remnant of that stuff left?

PRU. Yes.

PA. And to-morrow it may be gone. Prue, put your hat on, and run round to Lordly's, and buy it.

PRU. But, Patience! I've only seventy-five cents in my purse.

PA. Charge it.

PRU. Oh, what would papa say?

PA. I'll get the money from papa.

PRU. How?

PA. Never mind how. It's our own money. Grandma gave it to us for our very own.

PRU. But papa will never let us spend it on ball-dresses.

PA. Run along. And at the same time, buy me some slippers, those lovely little bronze ones in the show-case at Nichol's. They are just my number.

PRU. Patience!

PA. And something white to throw over my shoulders; I must have a pretty wrap; and — (*Exeunt* PRU. *and* PA.)

(*Enter* BURTON *and* GREY.)

GREY. Yes, as we were saying — this window ledge with your daughters' heads peeping through the flowers, makes a most attractive picture from the street.

BURT. Ah, you have an eye for form and color.

GREY. I'm a bit of an artist.

BURT. You were naturally struck, then, with the intense velvety crimson of the lip —

GREY. I was, indeed.

BURT. Which, contrasting as it does with the pale mauve hues, gives a remarkably beautiful effect.

GREY. Exquisite!

BURT. Though one might imagine that the showy beauty of my neighbor's "flora" across the way would attract more attention.

GREY. Your neighbor's "Flora"? Oh, no, no! (*Aside.*) Never saw her.

BURT. I see you do not go in merely for show.

GREY. No, indeed.

BURT. Well, now, for something choice for the home, healthy, and hardy, though so slender —

GREY. Yes, yes —

BURT. An excellent climber —

GREY. Climber?

BURT. Little curling tendrils —

GREY (*aside*). In the nape of her neck. (*Aloud.*) Yes — yes —

BURT. Graceful draperies —

GREY. Exactly —

BURT. Very thrifty —

GREY. Owing to your excellent training —

BURT. Of a clinging habit —

GREY. Just what I admire.

BURT. I can strongly recommend — (*Goes to window.*)

GREY (*aside*). He reads my wishes before I have time to speak them. Oh, Prue, Prue!

BURT. (*coming front*). By the way, though, how do I know you understand this sort of thing?

GREY. What sort of thing?

BURT. The care, the nurture of so delicate an organization —

GREY. Sir, I assure you —

BURT. Now, what are your views as regards stimulants?

GREY. Stimulants! Never use them.

BURT. There you are wrong, sir — all wrong. To be sure, there is such a thing as over-doing stimulants — I have frequently to warn my daughters to be more chary of them, still —

GREY (*aside*). Warn his daughters!

BURT. Still, to do without stimulants! No, sir, no — (*Moves off talking to himself.*) Why, Bowker's Phosphates mixed with the soil are invaluable!

GREY (*aside*). Very peculiar advice from my prospective father-in-law!

BURT. And as for tobacco smoke. What are your views as to tobacco?

GREY. I was brought up to regard tobacco as the most pernicious, poisonous —

BURT. Poisonous! Pernicious! My dear sir, if these are your views I should certainly not feel justified in intrusting you with so priceless a treasure as my — (*Moves off talking to himself.*) Tobacco smoke injurious! Why, only last week my chrysanthemums were saved from complete blighting by thorough fumigation with tobacco smoke.

GREY (*aside*). Extraordinary old gentleman!

BURT. How would you like instead — and this is a very precious gift I offer — my pretty little maurandia?

GREY. Miranda, sir? No, sir. No, sir, I thank you. (*Aside.*) Offers me Miranda, when I want Prue.

BURT. I admit the greater charms of —

GREY. If you would only look at my feeble attempt to portray the loveliness of your little Lancaster rose.

BURT. Ah, been sketching in my conservatory?

GREY. No, from memory merely. Here, sir, you have the roses of Lancaster and of York.

BURT. (*putting on his glasses*). I am glad to hear, sir, that you are a flower painter. That you attempt to imitate nature at her loveliest. That you do not fritter away your time over so-called figure pieces, that you are impressed with — (*Examines sketches.*) Eh! what, sir — what? I see no roses. These are young girls. Nothing but young girls in red and white dresses.

GREY. And what can be lovelier — more like a rose, than a young girl?

BURT. What! Compare a young girl to a rose — that queen of creation! And let me tell you, sir, that it gives me no pleasure to see a young woman decked out as you have here represented her. A plain dark dress, a white apron, her hair smooth and trig, — that is as I should always like to see a woman dressed. That is what I have always held up to my daughters, sir.

GREY. But when they go to balls —

BURT. They never do go to balls, sir.

GREY. But if they should wish to very much —

BURT. I should say decidedly, no —

GREY (*aside*). Ah, I begin to see why my dear little Prue refused. (*Aloud.*) But two such pretty girls as your daughters are — doesn't it seem rather hard?

BURT. Sir, a woman has something else to do in this world but to look pretty, and to waste her substance on pink and white dresses. Why, not a day passes but some devoted sister, flaming with a noble cause, comes to me to help her in her labors for the good of humanity. And do you think she comes in vain, sir?

GREY. From what I saw this morning of your generosity, sir, I should say not.

(*Enter* ADDIE.)

ADDIE. A lady to see you, sir.

BURT. Show her up, Addie.

ADDIE. Yes, sir. (*Exit.*)

BURT. There's a sample of what I was saying. Neat and trig — not a hair astray, not a ribbon or a sign of foolish ornamentation anywhere.

(*Enter* PATIENCE *as elderly spinster. She wears blue glasses.*)

PA. Good-morning, sir.

BURT. Good-morning, madam. Oh, don't go, Mr. Grey. Just take a book for a few minutes.

GREY. Thank you.

PA. (*aside*). Oh, dear! I didn't know Mr. Grey would be here.

BURT. Pray be seated, madam. What can I do for you?

PA. A few moments' conversation in private —

GREY. I'll just step into the conservatory.

BURT. Oh, sorry to trouble you. (GREY *eyes* PA. *curiously. She keeps her head turned away.*)

GREY. By the way, haven't I the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Wheeler?

PA. No, sir, Mrs. Cœur de Lion Smith.

BURT. So you know each other already?

GREY. Yes, indeed; we are old friends, aren't we, Mrs. Cœur de Lion Smith?

PA. Certainly. (*Aside.*) Go away.

GREY. It was stupid of me not to recognize Mrs. Cœur de Lion Smith at first.

PA. Oh, I dare say I'm somewhat changed. (*Aside.*) Go away, you'll spoil it all.

BURT. Since you are old friends, we shall not have to ask Mr. Grey to leave us.

GREY (*sitting down with alacrity*). Oh, thank you.

PA. Of course, I am always delighted to meet Mr. Grey. (*Aside to* GREY.) Go away, I tell you. (*Aloud.*) Whom I have known ever since he was so high, and used to steal our apples, and tear up our flower beds and —

BURT. Oh, eh — why, Mr. Grey —

GREY. All libels, I assure you.

PA. (*to* GREY *aside*). If you don't go, I'll invent worse ones, and quite prejudice papa against you. (*Aloud.*) I would never plant any seeds, I recall, without —

GREY (*jumping up*). Perhaps I had better withdraw for a few moments.

PA. (*aside, warningly*). I think you had. (*Aloud.*) Sorry to trouble you.

GREY. Remember me to your charming sister.

PA. Thank you.

GREY. And to your respected father, who I am sure —

PA. As I was saying, Mr. Grey used regularly as a boy to pull up *all* my —

GREY (*aside to* PA.). Oh, I'm going. (*Aloud.*) Good-morning.

BURT. Just step into the conservatory, Mr. Grey.

PA. Good-morning. (*Exit* GREY; PA. *seats herself and changes her tone to one of great gravity.*) You are, of course, deeply interested in the Cause, sir.

BURT. The *Cause?*

PA. *The* Cause.

BURT. Well — there are so many causes —

PA. Sir, there is but one cause. I allude to the crusade being waged by myself against the vitiation of our nurseries

— these contaminations of youth — these betrayers of infant innocence!

BURT. Ah, yes; you allude to —

PA. The frivolous literature of the day.

BURT. Madam, you have my fullest sympathy.

PA. I was sure of it! —your hand, sir. The frivolous literature of the day, in particular that pernicious collection of poems, vulgarly known as "Mother Goose."

BURT. (*taken aback*). Why, I was brought up on "Mother Goose."

PA. I have here a little work called "Mother Fact," which attempts in some measure to undo the pernicious influence of "Mother Goose." Take for instance, "Little Jack Horner," a lad whose example has probably corrupted thousands of innocent children, and see how he is presented, reformed, and elevated. I will give you first the original.

BURT. Why, I could repeat it myself from memory.

PA. Do so, then, sir.

BURT. Let me see: —

"Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner,
Eating a nice plum pie.
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said 'What a great boy am I.'"

PA. Now kindly attend to my version: —

"Little Jack Horner
Is never forlorner
Than when he is eating plum pie.
Because of the suet
He knows he will rue it,
And says 'What a wise boy am I.'"

There, sir, what do you think of that?

BURT. Why, my dear madam, I hardly know what to say to it. The comparison is certainly a startling one. The unsound doctrine of the first never struck me so before. Why, I even recall dandling Prudence and Patience — Prudence and Patience are my daughters, madam — on my knees, and repeating to them the old version of that foolish rhyme.

PA. I can hardly believe it, sir, of one of your venerable appearance.

BURT. I was younger then.

PA. It was enough to have corrupted their morals for life.

BURT. Still, I think they are pretty good girls.

PA. The evil they have imbibed may yet crop out. Now take the outrageous and monstrous perversion of truth embodied in the impossible feat of the cow jumping over the moon. Listen to this, sir. Instead of —

"High diddle, diddle,
The cat's in the fiddle" —

BURT. Very true! Who ever did see a cat in a fiddle!

PA. "The cow jumped over the moon" —

BURT. Preposterous.

PA. "The little dog laughed" —

BURT. Now that's beyond all reason.

PA. Is not one of the distinctions between man and the brute, the power of man to indulge in laughter and in tears?

"— To see the sport,
While the dish ran away with the spoon."

BURT. (*shaking his head*). Dear me, dear me!

PA. Now, sir, listen to this: —

"High diddle, diddle,
The sun's like a griddle,
So hot and so fierce are its rays.
The moon is much colder,
And very much older,
Than thought in our forefathers' days."

There, sir — there is a lesson in astronomy as cunningly concealed as a drop of medicine on a lump of sugar.

BURT. Yes, yes — dear me — dear me!

PA. Let me treat you to one more, sir. The original reads: —

"Tom, Tom, the piper's son,
Stole a pig, and away he run;
The pig was eat,
Tom was beat,
And Tom went crying through the street."

BURT. To be sure — I remember that very well.

PA. Comment on its obvious immorality is needless. Now, sir, my version runs: —

"Thomas, Thomas, the son of the baker,
Bought a pig and said he'd take her;
The way was long
The pig not strong,
So Thomas carried Piggy home."

BURT. Excellent — excellent!

PA. The last may not be a perfect rhyme, but in the excellence of the morals, exemplifying the kindness of Thomas towards the little pig, and the assurance that it was bought, not stolen, one overlooks any little deficiencies of diction.

BURT. Certainly, certainly. Really, I wonder all this never occurred to me before.

PA. But I do not pause at "Mother Goose." Here is a little list I have drawn out, which includes fairy tales from "Jack the Giant Killer," a most immoral, bloodthirsty narrative, down to "Little Red Riding Hood." "The Swiss Family Robinson" follows; for in spite of many wise maxims and much sound advice, the "Swiss Family Robinson" is, I am convinced, calculated to give the young an erroneous impression of the ease and facilities of life on a desert island.

BURT. I recall I was wild to be shipwrecked on a desert island after reading the "Swiss Family Robinson."

PA. But would you believe it, sir, in spite of the obvious merits of my work, I can find no house ready to undertake its publication!

BURT. You amaze me!

PA. And so, by private subscription alone must the money be raised to bring forth this much-needed work.

BURT. Madam, count on me.

PA. Sir, I knew I could.

BURT. It will give me much pleasure to draw you a check for —

PA. Twenty-five dollars in cash, sir.

BURT. We'll call it thirty — a check for thirty.

PA. Cash, sir, if you'll be so kind.

BURT. Well, then — here are three tens —

PA. Twenty-five is all I could possibly take. (*Aside.*) Oh dear, it would be downright stealing if he gave me more than grandma's present.

BURT. Well, then, twenty-five, if you insist. (*Gives her the money.*)

PA. Sir, your name will go down to posterity as a reformer of the nursery. (*Aside.*) Now I've done it, I'm frightened out of my wits; but, still, the money is our very own. Grandma gave it to us. (*Aloud*) Good-morning.

BURT. Good-morning. (*Exit* PA.) A most worthy woman, most worthy; and as for her cause — there's a great deal of truth in what she says — a great deal. "The cow jumped over the moon." H'm. Preposterous. And what was that rhyme about the garden with the cockle shells growing in it — and pretty maids in a row? That was where Mr. Grey must have conceived his absurd notion that young girls resembled roses. Roses indeed! (*Exit* BURT.; *Enter* PRU. *with bundles.*)

PRU. Patience! I wonder where Patience can be. I am distracted to show her the things. (*Unwraps parcels. Enter* PA. *gloomily, in her own character.*) O Patience, it's perfectly exquisite; and your slippers are loves; and I had enough over for the sweetest — But what's the matter? Couldn't you get the money, after all?

PA. O Prue — take them away! Don't ask me to look at them.

PRU. Why, what's the matter?

PA. I know how thieves feel now — and forgers, and all those dreadful people.

PRU. What is the matter?

PA. (*showing money*). Look there.

PRU. Oh, splendid! How did you get it?

PA. I stole it.

PRU. Patience!

PA. I stole it from poor, dear, deluded papa.

PRU. You didn't pry open his desk.

PA. No — worse. I played on his kindness of heart. I pretended I was a woman with a mission. O Prue, Prue! Why did you ever fall in love with Mr. Grey?

PRU. Patience! What are you talking about?

PA. I did it all for your sake, and now I feel as if hanging were too good for me.

PRU. Did papa really take you for a woman with a mission?

PA. I deceived him completely. Mr. Grey found me out, and almost spoiled everything; but I frightened him off.

PRU. How?

PA. By telling papa all sorts of bad things about him.

PRU. O Patience! How could you?

PA. Oh, I could do anything when I once get started. You don't know how easy fibbing is when you once begin.

PRU. Let's run and take the money right back again.

PA. But here are the things unpaid for.

PRU. Oh dear, yes.

PA. Poor, dear, deluded papa!

PRU. Patience!

PA. Well —

PRU. We can't undo it; but don't you think we could mend matters by not wearing the things — by giving them away in charity — to the blind beggar for instance?

PA. (*taking up slippers*). Do you think the blind beggar could wear these? They are sweet — aren't they, Prue?

PRU. I suppose this dress would hardly do for the blind beggar.

PA. How about the box papa is getting ready for the Esquimaux? We might send them up there.

PRU. So we might! Don't you know we were pitying those poor girls only yesterday. Papa had bought such horrid stuffs for them.

PA. Yes, that slate-colored one with the sickly green caterpillars on it.

PRU. And those clumsy, horrid boots.

PA. And handkerchiefs as heavy as sheets.

PRU. Would it make you feel better to send your slippers to the Esquimaux?

PA. Oh, a thousand times! I could never wear them myself.

PRU. Nor I my dress. But isn't it pretty, Patience?

PA. Don't look at it any more, Prue. Think how awfully becoming it will be to an Esquimaux princess.

PRU. We'll just do the things up tight in paper parcels, and tell papa they are old clothes for the Esquimaux.

PA. Not *old* clothes, Prue — we won't tell any more fibs.

PRU. Poor Patience!

PA. Come. We'll do them up now —

(*Exeunt* PRU. *and* PA. *Enter* BURT.)

BURT. Now to go on with my box for the Esquimaux mission. (*Draws in box.*) Nice stuff dress — shoes — hoods for the girls, and coats and trousers for the men. H'm! the box might be fuller. (*Holds up garments. Hums.*)

"Mistress Mary,
Quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
Silver bells
And cockle shells"—

Why, what am I humming? Actually that foolish old rhyme about pretty maids all in a row. (*Takes up sketches.*) That would just suit Mr. Grey, now, with his ridiculous notions about girls looking like roses. How would Mistress Mary sound in the amended version? Let me see — let me see —

"Mistress Mary,
Quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With Tragopogon
And Platycodon
And Inula all in a row."

And yet I don't know — I don't know! There was something rather more taking about the other, something decidedly catching in —

"Silver bells,
And cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row."

Yes, my little Prue and Patience are pretty maids. I wonder, now, how they would look in dresses like these.

(*Enter* PRU. *and* PA.)

PA. O papa! are you packing your box?

BURT. (*hastily throwing down the sketches*). Yes, my dear.

PRU. We have some things here, we thought you might like to send.

PA. A dress, slippers, and a shawl.

BURT. Why, my dear children, these come most opportunely.

PRU. We have done them up nicely for you.

PA. You needn't unwrap them.

BURT. Very thoughtful of you, my dear girls, very thoughtful. Boots, you said? Good thick soles, I hope.

PA. The — the heels are thick.

BURT. Good thick soles, and low heels, such as I always

insist on your buying. I hope the dress is a good serviceable color.

PRU. I think the Esquimaux will be satisfied with the color, papa.

BURT. Well, my dear, I trust to your judgment. And now a kiss apiece. I am sure you feel your hearts glow with the gratification of giving to the poor and needy.

PRU. (*aside to* PA.). O Prue, isn't it dreadful!

PA. (*aside*). Poor, dear, deluded papa!

BURT. Why, Patience, my dear — your handkerchief at your eyes!

PA. O papa, I — I don't deserve —

(*Enter* ADDIE, *wearing a showy chrysanthemum.*)

ADDIE. Mr. Grey is looking for you, Miss, to ask —

BURT. (*catching sight of flower*). What, what do I see? Wearing, actually wearing, my superb, my rare Val d'Anterre! (*Snatches flower.*)

ADDIE. Lor, sir, just a little common posy!

BURT. Common! Common! The Val d'Anterre common! I was raising it for the flower show. I should have won the first prize. The money was to have been expended —

PA. } On new dresses for us? O papa!
PRU. }

BURT. On the new society for introducing house-plants among the Esquimaux.

PA. } Oh dear!
PRU. }

BURT. And I was only this morning commenting on the neat and trig manner in which Addie was dressed. Not a ribbon or fol-de-rol to be seen.

ADDIE. Please, sir, my cousin came to call.

BURT. Well, I see no connection between your cousin and my Val d'Anterre. None whatever.

ADDIE (*to* PA.). Mr. Grey was asking could he come back, Miss.

PA. Oh, poor Mr. Grey. He's still in banishment. Come on, Prue.

(*Exeunt* PRU., PA., *and* ADDIE.)

BURT. Good girls, good girls, and pretty; though I should not want them to suspect it. Now let me see, where shall I stow these boots? Make an extraordinarily small parcel. Here — no — I think I'll untie them, and stuff them into the pockets of this great coat. (*Unties package.*) Why, what

are these? Doll's shoes? Surely no sensible woman ever dreamed of squeezing her feet into such nutshells. (*Compares it with one of his own.*) Such shoes for the Esquimaux! Perhaps Patience fancied them a very short race. I believe they are short, but broad. (*Stands slippers on the table.*) I hope the dress is more serviceable. (*Unwraps dress.*) What! Pink mosquito-netting! It's quite as flimsy as mosquito-netting. And such a showy color! Why, it's just the color of this absurd sketch, Mr. Grey calls the Lancaster rose. H'm the Rose of Lancaster. (*Examining sketch.*) And a twisted belt of rose stems. I wonder, now, how my daughters would look in such dresses. Prue, for instance. There's a sort of droop to the way Prue holds her head, and a certain delicate flush in her cheeks, that — now I come to think of it — is not so unlike a rose after all. These artists are not quite such fools as they look. And, then, her little feet in these slippers. What's the old verse?

"Her feet beneath her petticoat,
Like little mice, peeped in and out."

(*Puts slippers on hands and dances them over the table.*) That's the way they run about. Trip, trip, trip. But such heels. Now let's see the shawl. I hope that's warm and serviceable. (*Unwraps gossamer wrap.*) Why, this wouldn't keep a Katydid warm! I'll send my own coat instead. It would quite break their hearts to think their gifts displeased me, but really — Yes, my coat. This coat. Ah, a button off. That will never do. Where's a work-basket? Ah, here! I'll just sew the button on. (*Takes out a needle and tries to thread it.*) What extraordinarily small eyes needles have. Pig's eyes. There! No — went off on one side. I declare, women are quite clever creatures after all. My little girls, now, thread their needles as neatly and quietly — there — no. Ah, here's a famous big needle, and some blue darning cotton in it. That will do — that will do nicely. I'm glad my little girls were taught to sew, I shouldn't like to have to do it as a usual thing.

(*Enter* PRU., PA., *and* GREY.)

PRU. Why, papa!

PA. What are you doing?

GREY. Ah, my rose-colored gauze! (*Examines gauze.*)

BURT. I was just getting my coat in order to send to the Esquimaux.

PRU. But we gave you a lot of things for the Esquimaux.

BURT. There, my dear, did you ever see a button sewed on more securely?

PRU. With blue darning cotton! Oh, poor little papa!

BURT. (*looking with pride at button*). I say, Mr. Grey, can you sew on buttons?

GREY. I'm afraid to tempt Providence by learning. I don't want to die a bachelor.

PRU. (*to* PA.). He's opened the bundles!

BURT. Oh, by the way, I decided — of course I was very grateful for what you gave me — but, on the whole, I decided to send some little trifles of my own.

PA. Poor, dear, generous —

PRU. Deluded papa!

(*They both cry.*)

GREY (*coming forward with gauze*). So you are going to the ball after all. This is just the thing. (*Throws gauze over* PRU.) Look, Mr. Burton, the Lancaster rose.

BURT. Bless me, bless me!

PRU. Don't speak to us.

PA. We have deceived you.

(*A crash without.*)

BURT. My conservatory glass! (*Exit.*)

PA. The woman with the blue spectacles was — (*Exit after* BURT.)

GREY. So you were only teasing me? You will be my little Lancaster rose?

PRU. No, no; that dress is for the Esquimaux.

GREY. The Esquimaux shall not have my wilful little rose. (*He takes her hands.*)

PRU. Be careful! If I am a rose, I have thorns.

GREY. I'll take them with the rose.

PRU. Wait till you get the rose.

GREY. I have her fast. Now I'll extract the thorns. (*Kisses her hands.*) There — now she's harmless.

PRU. It isn't fair.

GREY. You don't need them any more. I'll protect you now.

PRU. What will papa say?

GREY. Do you know, at first I fancied he rather liked me.

PRU. How could he help it?

GREY. Then suddenly he seemed to take it into his head that, because I neither smoked nor drank, I must be a perfect mollycoddle.

PRU. Why, Mr. Grey!

GREY. Mr. Grey? Take care. I thought I had extracted all the thorns.

PRU. Well — Robert then.

GREY. Your father is a great smoker himself, I gather —

PRU. Why, no — he abhors it.

GREY. Likes his glass of wine at dinner.

PRU. He cannot endure the use of wine.

GREY. My dear Prue, he distinctly objected to me as a son-in-law, because I neither drank nor smoked.

PRU. What! you proposed to him first.

GREY. No; he offered you first, and then went back on it, and said I could have Miranda.

PRU. Miranda? Who's Miranda?

GREY. Why, don't you know?

PRU. No!

(*Exeunt* PRU. *and* GREY. *Enter* BURT. *and* PA.)

BURT. And you mean to tell me that you were that apparently estimable female in the blue glasses?

PA. Yes, papa.

BURT. I could not have believed it of you, Patience; I really could not!

PA. I know it was dreadful!

BURT. The only explanation I can make — Yes, it must be as that estimable female said — eh! — why — oh, you — you yourself were the estimable female, of course; but, nevertheless, there is much truth in it that the morals of "Mother Goose" are exceptionally bad, and their effect may even now be cropping out in this conduct of yours.

PA. My only excuse is that I did it for Prue.

BURT. For Prue?

PA. Yes, Mr. Grey was provoked, because she couldn't go to the ball.

BURT. What ball?

PA. The Artists' Ball, papa — Prue — well — Mr. Grey and Prue —

BURT. Yes; well, my dear. Mr. Grey and Prue —

PA. Exactly. Mr. Grey and Prue —

BURT. Well, my dear, you said that before. Aren't you going to finish?

PA. Papa, if Mr. Grey should ask you for Prue, what would you say?

BURT. Mercy on us, Patience!

PA. He's so steady.

BURT. Dear me — dear me!

PA. No bad habits.

BURT. You don't tell me —

PA. Never touches a cigar.

BURT. Ah.

PA. Doesn't know the taste of wine or beer.

BURT. Hm! (*Enter* GREY *with a cigarette and wine-glass.*)

GREY. Oh, pardon me! I will just finish my cigarette in the conservatory.

BURT. Sir!

GREY. I drink your very good health, sir!

BURT. Wine, sir! wine and cigars in my house! (*Enter* PRU.)

GREY (*aside*). Why, the old fellow has wheeled round again!

PRU. Oh, papa, won't you forgive us? (*Takes* GREY'S *hand.*)

BURT. Prudence, my child, I have forgiven you. I was beginning to feel that, perhaps, after all, young girls, like plants, must have their time of bloom. In fact, I was about to bestow my blessing upon you; but this sad spectacle, cigarettes and wine —

GREY (*aside*). I put my foot into it this time. (*Aloud.*) Why, sir, this is not wine.

BURT. Not wine?

GREY. It is only cold tea.

PRU. Yes, just taste, papa. (*Aside to* GREY.) I told you not to do this.

GREY. And the cigarette is only twisted paper. I detest smoking. I only did it to please you

BURT. To please me?

GREY. You know when you were sounding me on stimulants and smoking —

BURT. Why, sir, that was in the culture of plants.

GREY. Plants! And when you offered me the young lady who so strongly objects to furnace air and gas —

BURT. Objects to dry furnace air and gas —

GREY. I believe, sir, you called her Miranda.

BURT. Miranda! Good gracious, sir, can you possibly be referring to my maurandia? This is the second time you have mixed up flowers and girls.

GREY. Then Mirandia is—

BURT. Maurandia is a vine, sir, and you fancied—(*Laughs.*)

GREY. That you were offering me Miranda—

BURT. (*taking* PRUE'S *hand and placing it in* GREY'S). When you wanted Prue.

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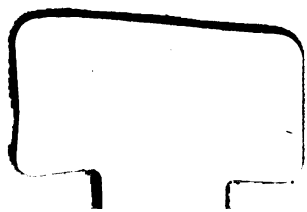

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